

early age he memorized the texts of antiquity which provided him with much of his source material. He travelled extensively through the Empire and for a time was a government inspector in newly conquered lands in Szechwan and Yunnan. Upon the death of his father, he succeeded to the latter's office, and in that position aided in the reform of the calendar. For daring to advocate the cause of a general against whom the wrath of the Emperor was directed, he was emasculated, a common punishment of those days. His history was written both before and after this event. How much of it was from the pen of his father there is no sure way of telling, but Ssu-ma Ch'ien seems to have been at least the chief author. Based largely upon earlier works and documents which it often incorporates with but slight changes, it covers the history of China from the beginning to Ssu-ma Ch'ien's own day and includes not only the narrative of political events but biographies of prominent men, accounts of some of the chief feudal states of the Chou and of some of the foreign peoples touched by the Han, chronological tables, and treatises on such phases of culture as the rites, music, divination, the calendar, and economics. After Ssu-ma Ch'ien's death additions were made to the *Shih Chi*, and it was revised and possibly rearranged—alterations which provide the scholar with a major textual problem. It was deservedly regarded by later generations as a model and became a prototype of a whole series of Dynastic Histories which, taken together with the *Shih Chi*, give a voluminous and, on the whole, an authoritative record of China's past—much more extensive and reliable than that possessed by any other

people over so long
a period.

Wu Ti seems to have attempted to modify religion in a way that would make it ancillary to that unity and emphasis upon imperial power for which he was striving. He celebrated with great pomp two sacrifices—jeng, by which prayer was made by the Emperor to Heaven (*T'ien*) from the sacred mountain, T'ai Shan, with the spirit of that peak as the messenger, and *shan*, by which prayer was made to the Sovereign Earth (*Ti*). Both purported to be revivals of earlier ceremonies and are said to have been performed by Shih Huang Ti, but apparently were inventions of Wu Ti and his advisers. Probably both were ostensibly for the purpose of asking the blessing of these divinities upon the